![Museum of Arts and Design logo - MAD in red, with "museum of arts and design" below]

MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN APPOINTS ELISSA AUTHER AS DEPUTY DIRECTOR OF CURATORIAL AFFAIRS & CHIEF CURATOR

Elissa Auther. Photo: David Lewis Taylor.

NEW YORK, NY (September 4, 2019) – The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) today announced the appointment of **Elissa Auther** to the position of Deputy Director of Curatorial Affairs and William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator, effective immediately. In this role, Auther will collaborate with Nanette L. Laitman Director **Chris Scoates** to create diverse exhibition programs and collections, foster relationships with artists and designers, and develop forward-looking strategies for engaging a broad audience.

"A highly valued colleague, Elissa is a gifted curator and scholar who is passionate about the vital and evolving importance of craft in contemporary art," said Scoates. "In her new leadership position at MAD, she will help define and reshape the important questions driving the dialogue and direction of art and design in the twenty-first century."

In December 2014, Auther joined MAD as its inaugural Windgate Research and Collections Curator, a position funded by the Windgate Charitable Foundation. In this role, Auther led an educational and curatorial partnership between the Museum of Arts and Design and Bard Graduate Center that has increased the visibility of craft and design in art history and the contemporary art world.

Auther has mounted four major exhibitions at MAD, including *Vera Paints a Scarf* (2019–2020), the first comprehensive exhibition devoted to the work of textile designer and entrepreneur **Vera Neumann** (1907–1993) and her contributions to American design; and the critically acclaimed *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Shapiro* (2018), which examined the influence of the feminist re-appropriation of craft and the decorative in the work of a diverse range of artists, including **Sanford Biggers**, **Ruth Root**, **Jasmin Sian**, **Edie Fake**, **Jeffrey Gibson**, and **Sara Rahbar**, among others.

"I am thrilled to be named Chief Curator at this pivotal moment for the Museum," Auther said. "At a time when makers of all kinds are being swiftly assimilated into the larger art historical narrative, MAD is uniquely positioned to guide that conversation forward. I am very excited to collaborate with my colleagues to break down the divisions between art, craft, and design, while advancing scholarship of the rich history from which this museum was formed."

Auther joined MAD from the University of Colorado, where she served as an Associate Professor of Contemporary Art and Director of the Art History and Museum Studies Program from 2003–2014. Concurrently, Auther held an Adjunct Curator position at the Museum of Contemporary Art Denver and co-directed *Feminism & Co.: Art, Sex, Politics,* a series of public programs that created access to critical debates surrounding feminist issues through the lens of creative practice, from performance to hands-on making.

During the course of her career, Auther has curated three, large-scale touring exhibitions with accompanying publications. Co-curated with **Bill Arning**, *Pretty/Dirty* (2015–2016), the retrospective of painter and photographer **Marilyn Minter**, closed its run at the Brooklyn Museum's Elizabeth A. Sackler Center for Feminist Art. *West of Center: The Counterculture Experiment in America, 1965–1977* (2011–2012), co-curated with **Adam Lerner**, examined the counterculture's unique integration of art, political action, and collaborative life activities. *Improvisational Gestures* (2016–2018), co-curated with **Nora Burnett Abrams**, marked the first survey exhibition of sculptor and performance artist **Senga Nengudi** and traveled to five institutions before closing at the University of Southern California's Fisher Gallery.

Prior to joining the University of Colorado, Auther taught at the University of Cincinnati in the School of Art, Architecture, Design and Planning from 2000–2002. She has published widely, from books and exhibition catalogues to numerous essays and journal articles. Books she has written or edited include: *String, Felt Thread: The Hierarchy of Art and Craft in American Art* (University of Minnesota Press, 2010), *West of Center: Art and the Countercultural Experiment in America, 1965–1977* (University of Minnesota Press, 2012), *Surface/Depth: The Decorative After Miriam Schapiro* (Museum of Arts and Design, 2018), *Marilyn Minter: Pretty/Dirty* (Gregory R. Miller & Co., Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, and Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, 2015), and *Senga Nengudi: Improvisational Gestures* (Museum of Contemporary Art Denver, 2015).

Auther holds a Ph.D. in the History of Art from the University of Maryland, and a BA in the History of Art from San Francisco State University.

ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN
The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design. For more information, visit madmuseum.org.

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